

**Kostas Grivas is 29 and has been a full time photographer for 5 years. He was born in Worcester of Greek Cypriot parents, and first became interested in photography when at the age of 15 he picked up his first automatic camera, an AGFA, from his local milkman via special milk tokens. After this novel introduction to the art he more or less decided he didn't want to do anything else, and became a freelance assistant for several provincial photographers. Today he has his own company, Image Development, which he runs with his partner. His interest in photography is augmented by a flair for design, which can be seen clearly in his creative work. In 1986 he graduated with honours in photography and design. He is a keen student of art history.**

Paradoxically, for a man who is so involved with advertising his only expenditure on it, unless one counts his designer business cards, is a half page entry in *The Creative Handbook*, the bible of photographers and advertising people. His company does mostly agency work; apart from that he gets work through personal introductions. He also does work for his own portfolio and selected models, and has a somewhat novel approach to this in that he never charges for photographs. But before you race round to his Richmond studio, hold your horses he is only interested in shooting a special type of model.

Most of Kostas' work comes from Samuel & Pearce of Richmond, who are part of the ACG group. I spoke to Kostas after work, which for him is twelve hours a day, up to seven days a week.

# Kostas

## GRIVAS

**MJ:** You don't do weddings and things like that?

**K:** No, no. Never touch them.

He says he doesn't do a lot of work with models; mostly he and his partner work with products.

When he shoots models it is mostly for fashion work.

**MJ:** When you work with a model, what do you look for? Does the agency tell you you will work with a particular model, for instance?

**K:** What usually happens is we have a brief for a job and we actually look for the type of style of model they ask for. If it's something to do with advertising and they want a tall slender girl with blonde hair, then obviously we look for index cards with models that fit that sort of bill, and then the client finalises what type of model he wants.

**MJ:** So you do the choosing?

**K:** We'll select a certain amount of models and the client will actually say, 'I prefer that one'. Then there'll be, obviously, a test shoot. After the test shoot, whichever one comes out best usually gets the job.

I asked Kostas what assignments he'd tackled recently involved shooting models. He told me that his company has been working on an ongoing project with a Japanese corporation for the past two years, but added that most of his work with models is personal, i.e. for his own portfolio, in particular, models he knows and those he'd like to photograph.

**MJ:** Do you make up portfolios for models as well?

**K:** We don't usually. If there's a particular project that I want to get involved with I'll try to find models, whether they're professional or non-professional, and try

to make a picture out of it, because the whole point of my business is to try to make a picture that somebody would like.

He uses the word 'picture' rather than photograph, and explains that he is creating an image rather than just taking photographs for the sake of it. Kostas' dedication to this 'image' cannot be questioned. He showed me a series of photographs shot in black and white of models in a striped and chequered room which he says took three days to set up, a whole day to shoot, and cost him £1400 out of his own pocket, including paying the models. Kostas stresses that when he photographs women he tries to create something tasteful, and would never even consider working for 'men's' magazines. The only magazine to pick up on his image so far has been *Amateur Photographer*, not so much

make-up artist. And obviously if a girl's going into the studio for the first time and she sees flashing lights, big cameras and hears a few technical terms....she'll pay you the money. There are too many people like that around.

**MJ:** What advice would you give models as regards approaching photographers?

**K:** The main advice is that if they phone a photographer and he doesn't answer in a professional manner by saying his company name first; or if his secretary doesn't pick up the phone and say he's on a shoot-or that he's unavailable then there must be something wrong. If the guy just picks up the phone and says the phone number with no company name at all it's obvious he's sitting at home waiting for girls to ring him up so he can make a quick buck out of them. (There ARE exceptions! Editor)

**MJ:** If he's not busy he's no good?

**K:** He can't be, can he?

**MJ:** Are you busy all the time?

**K:** We're always busy, yeah. I work 12 hours a day, and it's continuous, and if I have to, work 7 days a week; it's not always with models.

Kostas says he is a man under pressure, particularly for advertising work.

**MJ:** You say you never charge models for portfolios. Bearing in mind that other photographers have a living to make, how much should a model expect to pay for her card?

**K:** I don't know what the going rate is. I will only photograph people I know will look good, and will work in my style of photography.

What advice does Kostas have for aspiring models? He says the main thing is they approach only bona fide model agencies that are registered, well known and have been established for a number of years. They should ask the agency for an honest opinion about their potential, and they shouldn't part with a penny for photographs until they're reasonably certain they have some potential.

And what advice has he for the aspiring photographer? Kostas says that what usually happens is women are photographed primarily as sexual objects, something he frowns on.

He has done nude work himself, for his own portfolio, but admits he is not good at this kind of work. He says that in all his work with women he aims to show elegance and style, and challenges me to find anything vulgar or tasteless about his work. Looking through the shots he has brought with



• Model left: FIONA DALY; Agency: NUMBER ONE, BIRMINGHAM; Model right: AMANDA PITT; MMA MANCHESTER MODEL AGENCY; Hair & Make-up: ASHLEY JOHNSON; Photography: KOSTAS GRIVAS



him I take his point.

Kostas would like to develop his fashion work and be more widely published, particularly in foreign fashion magazines which allow more artistic freedom. He cites *Elle* (France) and *Moda* (Italy).

One complaint he has about models is that because they are related to agencies they are very expensive. Some of

the models his company uses can cost £120 to £150 per hour, and clients are often unwilling to pay this sort of money, which means that photographers are of necessity becoming more resourceful, specifically scouting for their own models.

He says agencies are putting models out of business and that girls who are popular and know they can make it should try to do more free-

lance work. No doubt many recent interviewees in *Model Journal* will take issue with this: Debbie Hillaire for instance.

Not that Kostas himself comes cheap. His daily rate through the agency is a minimum of £700, which includes a full day for his partner and himself, but, he stresses, if you want the best, you have to pay for it. □